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THE HOME NEWS & TRIBUNE

SECTION 1

LOCAL REPORT

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PCBs found in 3 businesses

Some industrial-park workers may be at risk

by SARAH GREENBLATT
STAFF WRITER

SOUTH PLAINFIELD

Federal officials have found polychlorinated biphenyls in air, dust and concrete samples in three businesses in Hamilton Industrial Park, South Plainfield, but they continue to stress

workers face no immediate health threat.

Over the last six months, PCBs — known to cause disorders of the skin and kidneys and suspected of causing cancer — have been found at varying concentrations both on and off the federal Superfund site, in spots ranging from the back yards of homes near the property to a microwave oven inside a company lunchroom.

Officials from the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Diseases Registry have said their test findings indicate health hazards only to workers who have been employed at the industrial park for at least a decade.

"Our findings from this sampling do not change what we understand is the threat to the occupants," said

The oily chemical was also found at hazardous levels in fish taken from the Bound Brook and in Piscataway's New Market Pond, into which the brook flows.

Eric Wilson, who is coordinating EPA efforts at the 26-acre industrial park.

The site was placed on the National Priorities List for extensive

cleanup under the federal Superfund program last month, based on the discovery of hazardous levels of PCBs in soil samples.

Low levels of PCBs were found behind several homes on Spicer Avenue, which borders the site.

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration found PCBs on a microwave oven inside Columbia Products, one of 15 businesses in the industrial park.

Please see PCB, page B2

Property owner pushes for Preserve

• With his dog

ENROLLMENT SOARS

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into the floodplain.
In March 1997, the service con-
cluded for a second time that the
project, as proposed, "would result
in unacceptable adverse impacts to
fish and wildlife resources and
their supporting ecosystems."

The service claimed the turn-
pike authority has not made a con-
vincing case that the road is
needed and that the proposed path
is the best option. According to
federal Clean Water Act guidelines,
discharge of fill into waterways is
forbidden unless there are no feasi-
ble alternatives that would have
fewer adverse effects on the envi-
ronment.

In its February report, the Turn-
pike Authority outlined three alter-
native road alignments, including a
bridge over the actual lake, but dis-
missed them all as being more en-
vironmentally damaging and poten-
tially more expensive.

Authority representatives re-
ferred all questions to Edward
Gross, the authority's executive di-
rector. Gross was out of state and
could not be reached for comment.

Mayor Cantu, a proponent of
Route 92, stands by studies by the
authority and a township-commis-
sioned firm predicting massive
traffic nightmares on local roads if
Route 92 is not built. By pushing
for a county open-space purchase,
Cantu said he is helping to address
a common fear of Route 92 foes:
that the road will attract commer-
cial development nearby.

Jeffers is resigned to the fact
that he will not have the last word
on what happens to his land.

"We have no control with what
happens to the site," he said. "If
they want to build the silly road,
they'll build the silly road."

lands development permit.

The Jeffers family, longtime own-
ers of Walker-Gordon, is equally se-
rious about land preservation.
Earlier this year, the Jeffers ac-
quired a neighboring 100-acre site
which includes the 35-acre McCor-

by government, would not be sub-
ject to political whims. The Audubon
Society has expressed interest in
participating, he said.

"We want to make sure this land
is not forgotten. Politicians some-
times forget," Cantu said.

PCB: Some workers at risk

■ Continued from page B1

The oily chemical, formerly used
in manufacturing electronics compo-
nents, was also found at hazardous
levels in fish taken from the Bound
Brook, which traverses the prop-
erty, and in Piscataway's New Mar-
ket Pond, into which the brook
flows.

Several workers interviewed in
recent months have said they are
not alarmed by the findings.

The most recent round of tests
revealed that levels of cadmium,
lead and PCBs in the air are well
below federal standards, Wilson said.

The tests were done at Columbia
Products, which employs about 50
people; Robalo Enterprises, and
Norpak, a division of D.S.C. of New-
ark Enterprises, which owns the
property.

The EPA found PCBs in the air at
concentrations of one to 45 micro-
grams per cubic meter, while federal
standards set 500 micrograms as the
safe limit, Wilson said.

In dust samples the agency tested,
PCB levels were measured from 97
to 21,200 parts per million.

Wilson said that while there are
no federal standards for PCBs in

dust, workers could be at risk if they
are chronically exposed to the
tainted dust, which could be in-
gested or absorbed through the skin.

To reduce the risk of exposure, he
said, workers should wear gloves
while on the job and wash their
hands before eating or smoking.

Tests of concrete chips removed
from the floors in three of the busi-
nesses revealed PCB levels from 96
to 78,000 parts per million, he said,
adding there is no federal standard
for concrete contamination.

The concrete testing is part of an
agency effort to measure the bound-
aries of contamination inside the
buildings on the site.

Wilson said the EPA is waiting to
hear what D.S.C. and previous prop-
erty owner Cornell-Dubilier
Electronics plan to do to clean up
the contamination. In the meantime,
the EPA will conduct additional tests
of nearby homes and businesses.

Robalo owner A.J. DiLello said he
is eager for the cleanup to begin.

"None of the workers around here
seems to care, but I care. It's a
health hazard," DiLello said. "I
would really like to see them come
in here and clean the place up."

Edison Mayoral Candidates' Debate



Thursday, Oct. 23, • 7-9 P.M.
Edison High School, Boulevard of Eagles

Edison mayoral candidates:

Mayor George Spadaro (Democrat)
Councilwoman Eileen Teffenhart (Republican)

Independent Candidates:

